

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-25

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SUBJ: DEMONSTRATION OF INDEPENDENCE AT NRW/ FDP CONVENTION

1. THE CONVENTION OF THE NORTHRHINE- WESTPHALIAN FDP ON MARCH 31 AND APRIL 1, 1973, ATTENDED BY MORE THAN 400 DELEGATES REPRESENTING ABOUT 20,000 MEMBERS WAS A CLEAR DEMONSTRATION OF THE PARTY' S INDEPENDENCE OF SPD AND CDU AND OF A RECOVERED SELF- CONFIDENCE BASED ON THE RETURNS OF THE FEDERAL ELECTIONS OF NOVEMBER 1972 AND OF THE RECENT EASTERN WESTPHALIAN LOCAL ELECTIONS. YET THERE IS SOME UNEASINESS ABOUT THE SOLIDITY OF VOTER SUPPORT FOR THE FDP AS EXPRESSED IN SPEECHES BY HORST LUDWIG RIEMER, NRW FDP CHAIRMAN AND NRW MINISTER OF ECONOMICS, AND TRANSPORT AND HANS- DIETRICH GENSCHER, FEDERAL FDP VICE CHAIRMAN AND FEDERAL MINISTER OF THE INTERIOR. BOTH DEMANDED INCREASED PARTY EFFORTS TO CONVINCE THE VOTER OF THE NECESSITY OF A LIBERAL PARTY AS AN INSURANCE AGAINST EXTREMIST DEVELOPMENT IN BOTH DIRECTIONS.

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2. BOTH SPEAKERS STRESSED THAT THE SPD IS A VERY FAIR AND CONSIDERATE COALITION PARTNER. HOWEVER, RECENT ATTEMPTS OF LEFTIST FORCES IN THE SPD TO MODIFY THE GOVERNMENT PROGRAM ACCORDING TO THEIR IDEOLOGICAL CONCEPT REQUIRES THE INCREASED VIGILANCE OF THE FDP. THE FDP, ACCORDING TO GENSCHER AND RIEMER WOULD MAKE EVERY EFFORT TO PREVENT THE ABSOLUTE MAJORITY LEGITIMATELY SOUGHT BY THE SPD. AT THE SAME TIME, THE PARTY RESENTS THE NOTION OF BEING REGARDED AS A " NECESSARY EVIL" BY SPD RADICALS. THE FDP IS NOT A PARTY TO PROCURE A MAJORITY FOR OTHER PARTIES BUT A COALITION PARTNER WITH EQUAL RIGHTS, WHICH WILL ENTER A COALITION TO BRING A MAXIMUM OF LIBERAL PRINCIPLES INTO POLITICAL PRACTICE.

3. RIEMER REFUSED TO COMMIT HIMSELF TO A CONTINUATION OF A COALITION WITH THE SPD IN THE NEXT LOCAL (1974), STATE (1975) AND FEDERAL ELECTIONS AND DEFENDED THE RIGHT OF FDP LOCALS IN EASTERN WESTPHALIA TO FORM COALITIONS DEVIATING FROM THE SOCIAL- LIBERAL PATTERN ON STATE AND FEDERAL LEVEL. BOTH SPEAKERS EMPHASIZED THE NECESSITY TO PREVENT ABSOLUTE MAJORITIES BY STORMING THE " RED" AS WELL AS THE " BLACK" TOWN HALLS.

4. BOTH GENSCHER AND RIEMER EXPRESSED THEIR CONCERN ABOUT THE " CRUMBLING CDU" WHICH PROGRAMATICALLY HAD MISSED THE BOAT OF THE SEVENTIES AND WHOSE LEADERSHIP CANNOT TEMPT THE FDP; A COMPLETELY NEW PROGRAM WOULD BE NEEDED TO MAKE THE CDU ACCEPTABLE AS A PARTNER. THE ABUSE OF THE CDU BUNDESRAT MAJORITY IN BLOCKING VITAL LEGISLATION WAS APT TO TURN STATE ELECTIONS INTO INDIRECT BUNDESRAT ELECTIONS PRECLUDE THE FORMATION OF STATE COALITIONS DEVIATING FROM THE FEDERAL PATTERN.

5. SOMEWHAT OUT OF CONTEXT WITH THE GENERAL LINE OF HIS SPEECH MINISTER GENSCHER NOTED THAT THE ATLANTIC ALLIANCE WOULD REMAIN THE PLATFORM AND MAINSTAY OF THE GOVERNMENTS POLICY OF DETENTE TOWARDS THE EAST. " THE POLITICAL AND MILITARY PRESENCE OF THE UNITED STATES IS INDISPENSIBLE FOR THE MAINTENANCE OF THE POWER EQUILIBRIUM IN EUROPE." THIS POSITION WOULD BE DEFENDED AGAINST ALL DIRECT AND INDIRECT ATTACKS AGAINST THE ALLIANCE WITH THE UNITED STATES.

6. THE CONVENTION DEALT WITH A VARIETY OF MOTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. CONTROVERSIAL DRAFTS WERE REFERRED TO SPECIAL COMMITTEES OR TO LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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THE FEDERAL EXECUTIVE BOARD, SUCH AS CODETERMINATION, SEPARATION

OF CHURCH AND STATE AND A DEMAND OF THE YOUNG DEMOCRATS TO MODIFY THE RESOLUTION OF THE MINISTER PRESIDENTS AGAINST THE EMPLOYMENT OF RADICALS IN THE PUBLIC SERVICE. IN THE DEBATE ON THIS SUBJECT MINISTER GENSCHER STATED THAT THE DKP COULD NOT BE REGARDED AS A DEMOCRATIC PARTY; THE GOVERNMENT MACHINERY MUST NEVER GET INTO THE HANDS OF THE OPPONENTS OF BASIC ORDER.

7. ALFRED OLLESCH (57) FDP BUNDESTAG DEPUTY, WAS ELECTED VICE CHAIRMAN TO SUCCEED WOLFRAM DORN FORMER PARLIAMENTARY STATE SECRETARY IN THE FEDERAL MINISTER OF INTERIOR, WHOSE POLITICAL CAREER WAS TERMINATED, WHEN HIS CONNECTIONS WITH "QUICK" MAGAZINE BECAME KNOWN.

COMMENTS

8. IN GENERAL THE CONVENTION PRESENTED A PICTURE OF UNITY AND THE IMPRESSION THAT THE CONSERVATIVE AND PROGRESSIVE ELEMENTS HAVE BEEN SUCCESSFULLY INTEGRATED. THIS IMPRESSION MAY BE DECEPTIVE AND THE FACT THAT THE MOST CONTROVERSIAL ISSUES WERE REFERRED TO COMMITTEES SEEMS TO INDICATE SOME DEEP DIFFERENCES OF OPINION ON CERTAIN SUBJECTS. HOWEVER, THE FDP FOR THE FIRST TIME CAN POINT WITH SOME COMPLACENCY AT THE INTERNAL STRIFE IN THE SPD AND CDU.

9. UNLESS THE SPD SHOULD SUDDENLY RENOUNCE THE GOVERNMENT'S BASIC PROGRAM, THERE IS NO REAL PROSPECT THAT DP WILL BE SEEKING A NEW COALITION PARTNER, ESPECIALLY SINCE THE CDU WAS SPECIFICALLY FOUND UNACCEPTABLE. HOWEVER, THE STATED OBJECTIVE OF MANY IN THE SPD TO SEEK AN ABSOLUTE MAJORITY IN THE NEXT ELECTION HAS MADE THE FDP LEADERSHIP SOMEWHAT NERVOUS. THEY REMEMBER WELL WHAT A LONG PERIOD IN THE POLITICAL WILDERNESS CAN DO TO PARTY UNITY. THUS, SELF-PRESERVATION DICTATED THE NECESSITY OF A CLEAR REMINDER TO THE SPD THAT THE FDP SHOULD NOT BE TAKEN FOR GRANTED.

10. WILLY WEYER, NRW INTERIOR MINISTER AND FORMER LAND CHAIRMAN, SERVED AS HONORARY CHAIRMAN OF THE CONVENTION AND DEMONSTRATED AGAIN THE FORCE OF HIS PERSONALITY AND HIS GENUINE ORATORICAL TALENTS. HE WAS SEVERELY CRITICIZED, HOWEVER, BY SOME OF THE RANK AND FILE FOR HIS RELATIVE INACTIVITY. YET, IT WAS FOR HEALTH REASONS (DIABETES) THAT HE HAD DECIDED A YEAR AGO THAT HE COULD NOT CONTINUE ON AS BOTH MINISTER AND PARTY CHAIRMAN.

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RIEMER GAVE A SURPRISINGLY LACKLUSTRE PERFORMANCE AS KEYNOTER AND FAILED TO AROUSE ANY ENTHUSIASM. GENSCHER, ON THE OTHER HAND, SAID ESSENTIALLY THE SAME THINGS BUT RECEIVED A TREMENDOUS OVATION.

HENNEMEYER

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